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- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): IDEX
ASA [NO/NO]; P.O. Box 519, N-1385 Asker (NO).
- (72) Inventors; and
- (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): MARTINSEN,
Ørjan, G. [NO/NO]; Fagerstrandveien 30, N-1368
Stabekk (NO). NYSÆTHER, Jon [NO/NO]; Edmund
Neuperts gate 2, N-0475 Oslo (NO). RIISNÆS, Knut
[NO/NO]; Ragnhild Schibbys vei 50, N-0968 Oslo (NO).
MOSTAD, Geir [NO/NO]; Rugveien 59, N-0679 Oslo
(NO). PEDERSEN, Rune [NO/NO]; Stokkerskogen
11A, N-1389 Heggedal (NO). CHRISTIE, Nicolai, W.
[NO/NO]; Elgfaret 63, N-1362 Hosle (NO). CLAUSEN,
Sigmund [NO/NO]; Norengveien 55, N-0755 Oslo (NO).
- (74) Agent: PROTECTOR IP CONSULTANTS AS; P.O.
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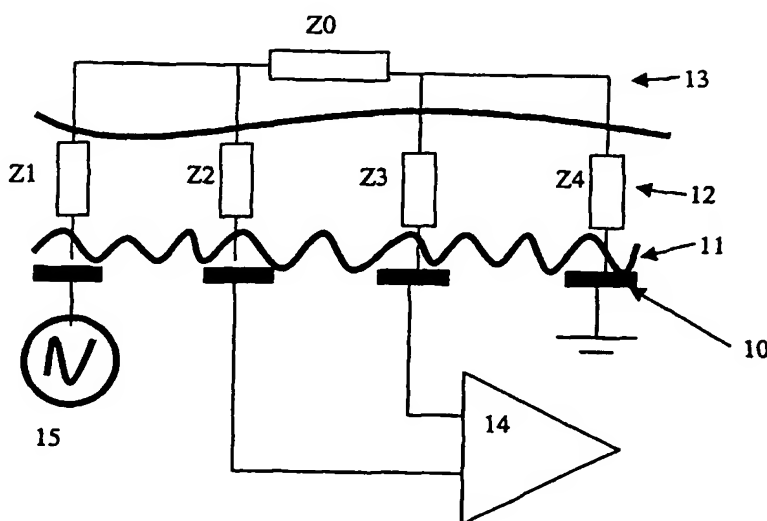
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(54) Title: LIVE FINGER DETECTION BY FOUR-POINT MEASUREMENT OF COMPLEX IMPEDANCE



(57) Abstract: Method and sensor
assembly determining the condition of
a structure, especially for confirming
if a measured fingerprint is on a live
finger, by measuring characteristics of
close to the structure surface, the sensor
comprising a first pair of current supply
electrodes coupled to a current source,
providing an electrical current to the
skin, at least two pickup electrodes at
chosen and different positions relative
to the current supply electrodes, at least
a first of said pickup electrodes being
coupled to an instrument for measuring
the voltage between said first pickup
electrode and at least one of the pickup
or current supply electrodes, storage
means for a predetermined set of values
characterizing a certain condition of
the surface, and means for comparing
the characteristics from each pickup

electrode with the measurements of the other pickup electrodes and with the predetermined set of characteristics for determining the surface condition.



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Live finger detection by four-point measurement of complex impedance.

This invention relates to a sensor assembly and method for determining the condition of a structure, especially for confirming if a measured fingerprint is on a live finger, by
5 measuring characteristics of close to the structure surface.

Introduction

Capacitance or impedance based fingerprint sensors are some of the most promising approaches to offer a low-cost, miniaturized device for biometric identification. Such
10 sensors are therefore possible candidates for integration in mobile phones etc.

To enhance the trust of fingerprint sensors, it is of great importance that any attempt to fool the system by using fake fingers may be detected and rejected. A fake finger will typically consist of a slab of material with electrical properties resembling that of a
15 finger, and with a fingerprint carved or molded into its surface. In a more extreme case one may also imagine that a dead, cut-off finger may be used.

For live finger detection systems, it is important both that the probability of accepting a false finger (false acceptance ratio - FAR) and the probability of rejecting a real finger
20 (false rejection ratio - FRR) are extremely low. This makes it important to develop a method for identifying very characteristic and unique properties of a living finger, properties that can not easily be replicated by either synthetic materials or by other biological substance than living tissue, and which are typical of the vast majority of fingers in the population.

25

For low cost capacitive based fingerprint sensors some kind of impedance measurement of the finger properties will be ideal, as it can most often be integrated directly on the device by using existing measurement structures or adding a number of extra electrodes.

30 Prior art

Several different types of fingerprint sensors have recently been developed, from 2-dimensional matrix sensors as described in US 5,953,441 through sensor arrays reconstructing the fingerprint image from series of semi-overlapping partial images in

US 6,289,114 to linear sensors as described in EP 0988614 which scans the finger surface and uses the measured finger velocity to reconstruct the finger image.

Attempts to detect live fingers include both blood oxygenation and blood pulse
5 measurements. However, as the blood circulation in the finger may be virtually non-present in very cold fingers, these methods are far from being "water-proof". Neither are these principles easy to implement on a low cost device.

US Patents 6,175,641, 5,953,441 and patent application US2001/0005424 A1 all show
10 different impedance based methods of investigating whether an object which is placed on a fingerprint sensor corresponds to a live finger.

US patent 6,175,641, which relates to impedance sensing on an optical matrix sensor, shows two different methods for measuring the electrical characteristics of the finger:
15 Firstly, the dielectric constant is measured locally by applying an AC signal between two closely spaced electrode comb structures on the sensor surface. It is claimed that this measurement can separate living tissue (high dielectric constant) from commercial plastics (low dielectric constant).

20 Secondly, the sensor has a so-called double dot electrode for determining the impedance of the finger, which presumably will give additional information that can be used to distinguish real fingers from fake. The patent also mentions the use of several frequencies to increase the security of the measurement.

25 The method described in this patent however has a number of weaknesses. While the dielectric measurement will perhaps work well for dry fingers, for sweat or humid fingers the closely spaced comb structures will most probably be short-circuited by saline sweat, and no useful information will be obtained.

30 In addition the impedance of a living finger, as measured by the double dot system, may vary with at least one order of magnitude depending on the humidity of the finger. It is therefore difficult to use this as criteria to identify a finger, and both the impedance

magnitude, its phase and its variation with frequency could probably be faked by simple well-known materials from everyday life, such as a peeled potato.

Patent 5,953,441 describes spoof detection for an AC capacitive fingerprint sensor containing a matrix of capacitive sensing elements. The main idea for live finger detection is here to send AC signal through an electrode around the rim of the sensor area, and to detect the phase of the signals on the sensor elements, this phase being characteristic of a living finger.

However, while this method will rule out a number of different fake finger materials, it will be relatively easy to find a material that gives approximately the same phase as a finger, and thereby to fool the system.

Patent application US2001/0005424 A1 shows a method resembling the method described in 6,175,641. The impedance of the finger (either between two electrodes or between one electrode and "infinity") is measured as a function of frequency. By comparing the curve to a reference curve the living characteristics of a finger may then be detected. This method however adds little to the methods described above. The absolute impedance and frequency response between different fingers, and between different states (e.g with respect to humidity) of the same finger, differ so much that the "live finger criteria" would have to be very wide, and so the principle would be easy to fool.

International patent application PCT/NO03/00157 (WO03094724), hereby included here by way of reference, shows another live finger detection principle, based on four point measurements of complex impedance. Here, an AC current or voltage is applied between two electrodes while measuring the voltage drop between two other electrodes, all electrodes being in contact with the finger surface. The four-point principle, applied to finger impedance measurements, is visualized in figure 1. An AC current is sent through the finger through the outer electrodes, while the voltage drop is measured between the two inner electrodes using a differential amplifier.

Summary of invention

The aim of the current invention is to ensure a four-point measuring system for live finger detection that can be used to compensate for differences in finger characteristics among a population, such as a varying stratum corneum thickness.

5

To reach this aim, the proposed invention consists of an impedance measuring system with an array of at least four electrodes. The electrodes may be in direct contact with or capacitively coupled to the finger through an insulating layer. The electrodes are arranged in such a way that they can be used in at least two different four-point electrode configurations, corresponding to different relative placements between the current and voltage sensing electrodes. The objects of this invention is obtained as described in the accompanying claims.

10

The use of a four point technique makes it possible to cancel out the series impedance of the horny layer, thus directly measuring the impedance of the finger interior. The impedance of the horny layer is extremely dependent on the humidity of the skin and on ambient conditions such as temperature. This makes it difficult to identify "narrow" criteria that may be used to separate real fingers from fake. In contrast, the humidity of finger interior remains fairly constant under varying ambient conditions. The impedance of the finger interior (living skin and tissue) is therefore far more constant, and more reproducible from person to person.

15

20

The four-point principle will thus make it easier to obtain "narrow" criteria that can be used for identifying whether a finger is a real and live finger.

25

Because of the layered structure of the skin, the four point principle also gives an inherent "depth selectivity": By increasing the frequency the measurement is influenced by still deeper portions of the living skin. This makes it possible to measure depth-specific variations in the electrical properties merely by carrying out a frequency sweep.

30

The living tissue of the finger interior also has very characteristic dispersions (variation in electrical properties with frequency) that can be used to identify a real finger with a

high degree of security. These properties change after death or when a finger is cut off from the hand, and makes it possible also to determine whether the finger is live.

One weakness of the principle proposed in PCT/NO03/00157 (WO03094724), is that
5 the four-point impedance is that the impedance is measured with only one set of electrodes where all electrodes have a fixed distance.

Depending on the relative positions of the electrodes of the four-point structure, the impedance measurements will however be more or less affected by the stratum corneum
10 (horny layer).

In the limit of a very short distance between the current electrodes, the current will not penetrate into the living skin of the finger interior at all, thus giving a measurement only of the stratum corneum alone.
15

In the other limit, with a large electrode distance, the measurement will be largely determined by the properties of the living tissue of the finger interior.

Because different people have different stratum corneum thicknesses, a fixed electrode
20 distance will give different results for different people, thus making it difficult to identify a living finger without using very wide criteria. If the criteria are not narrow enough, the principle will be easier to spoof.

It will be known to the skilled engineer that different electrode configurations, where
25 the electrodes have different relative placements, corresponds to the measurement of different portions of the object adjacent the electrodes. The portion of a finger that is measured by the four-point principle is however not only determined by the distance between the two current sensing electrodes and between the two voltage sensing electrodes, but also on the electrode geometry and the relative placement of the voltage
30 sensing electrodes with respect to the current electrodes.

By activating different electrodes in the array or by interchanging the role (voltage sensing or current) of electrodes already in use, it can therefore be switched between different four point electrode configurations.

- 5 By switching between a number of different electrode configurations within the array it will thus be possible to measure sections of the finger e.g corresponding to different measuring depths, and thus compensate for variations in e.g stratum corneum thickness.

10 To exemplify, a characteristic dispersion (shift in complex impedance with frequency) that is observed for one person using one electrode arrangement, may be detected for another person using another arrangement.

15 To reveal the same dispersion, a person with a very thick stratum corneum may for instance require a larger distance between the current injection or voltage sensing electrodes than a person with a thin stratum corneum.

20 A minimum criterion for accepting an object as a live finger may be that at least one specific, impedance related phenomenon is detected for at least one of the electrode arrangements.

It should be emphasized that the focus on "differences in stratum corneum thickness" is only exemplary. The principle applies to all properties of the finger where a shift in electrode geometry may help to reveal certain impedance related phenomena within a given frequency range.

25 Preferably, to enhance the security of detecting a live finger across a significant population, the number of possible electrode configurations may be higher than two, for instance 3-5. The various configurations can of course be arranged in the form of separate arrays so that a minimum of switching is required.

30 The invention will be described below with reference to the accompanying drawings, illustrating the invention by way of examples.

- Figure 1 illustrates the electrical equivalent of the two layer structure being interrogated by a sensor assembly according to the invention.
- Figure 2 illustrates one possible configuration for switching the roles of a number of electrodes according to the invention.
- 5 Figure 3 illustrates a multivariate model to distinguish between live fingers and other objects. Note that if only one of the variables (either variable one or variable 2) is used, some of the "false fingers" (marked with red) are likely to be mistaken for real fingers.
- Figure 4 shows the measured impedance absolute value as a function of frequency for a first electrode configuration.
- 10 Figure 5 shows the measured impedance phase as a function of frequency for a first electrode configuration.
- Figure 6 shows the measured impedance absolute value as a function of frequency for a second electrode configuration.
- 15 Figure 7 shows the measured impedance phase as a function of frequency for a second electrode configuration.
- Figure 8 shows a plot the real and imaginary part of the measured 4-point impedance for a number of live fingers with frequency as a parameter.

20 Practical implementation

In figure 1 a finger surface 11 is positioned on a number of sensors 10. The finger structure comprises two layers, the stratum corneum 12 and the live live tissue 13 of the live finger. The stratum corneum (horny layer) 12 constitutes impedances Z_1 , Z_2 , Z_3 and Z_4 , respectively, at each of the four illustrated electrodes 10, while the living tissue represents the impedance Z_0 .

25

In a practical device, a four-point measurement may be implemented by an array of electrodes on the sensor surface, e.g defined in thin film, thick film or printed circuit board technology. The electrodes may either give a galvanic contact with the finger or

30 be passivated with a thin dielectric to give a pure capacitive coupling from electrode to finger.

A typical size of the individual electrodes (both current and voltage electrodes) will be $0.5 - 5 \text{ mm}^2$, and a typical minimum electrode spacing will be $0.3 - 2 \text{ mm}$.

Figure 2 shows an example of how an array of 8 electrodes can be arranged to allow for
5 measurements at a number of different current electrode distances. In this structure, the
voltage measurements are always performed between the electrodes 4 and 5, while the
two switches S1 and S2 are used to make different combinations of the electrodes 1,2,3
(AC source) with the electrodes 6,7 and 8 (AC drain or ground), and thereby vary the
current electrode distance. Alternatively, the role of the current and voltage sensing
10 electrodes can be interchanged so that current is always sent between the innermost
electrodes and the voltage measurement is switched between various combinations of
the remaining electrodes. It is known from prior art that if the role of the voltage sensing
pair is interchanged with the current electrode pair, the measured impedance remains
essentially the same.

15

By choosing the range of inter-electrode distances corresponding to stratum corneum
thickness variations in the population (or other variations that give corresponding
effects, such as differences in humidity), it will be possible to obtain information that
can be compared more directly and thus used to "narrow" the criteria for a real finger.
20 This will enable live finger identification with a higher degree of certainty than any of
the above described methods.

In designing the read-out system, it is important to maximize the input impedance in the
voltage sensing branches, as too low impedance will give rise to a parasitic input current
25 that influences on the measuring principle. To minimize the effect of input impedances,
an amplification coupling as described in US 4,956,729 can be employed. The input
current to a voltage pad can also be minimized by shielding the input pad (and the track
connecting it with the amplifier) by an electrode having the same voltage as the input
pad itself ("active shield"). Such a voltage is readily obtained by a simple voltage
30 follower stage where the input voltage is fed back to the shielding electrode.

If the input impedance of the amplifier is sufficiently high (or equivalently, if the input current is sufficiently low), the detected voltage will not be influenced by the impedances Z_2 , Z_3 , Z_1 and Z_4 through the horny layer, but only by Z_0 , being characteristic of the finger interior.

5

It should be emphasized that the disclosed system in figure is only one possible way the electrodes can be arranged. In principle, all electrode arrangements yielding two or more different electrode configurations can be used. For voltage or impedance sensing, the fingerprint sensor elements themselves can be used.

10

Upon live finger detection, four-point complex impedance measurements are obtained for each of the electrode arrangements for a single frequency or across a range of frequencies. For instance, the properties can be measured continuously with frequency or at a number of different discrete frequencies. The frequency span is preferably 1-3 orders of magnitude.

15

By measuring the amplitude of the current through the finger and the differential voltage in at least two different time instants during a signal cycle, the reactance X_0 and resistance R_0 of the complex impedance $Z_0 = R_0 + jX_0$ can be determined for each frequency. Other techniques for detecting the components of the complex impedance may also be used.

20

Live finger data will preferably be recorded right before, right after or most preferably, during the course of fingerprint image capturing. This makes it difficult to spoof the system by first applying a real finger and then a fake finger with the correct fingerprint pattern. In some systems, the live finger detection and fingerprint imaging may not be done at the same time due to conflicting signals. In this case, it is possible to suspend the fingerprint imaging for short time intervals and carry out the live finger detection within this time frame. It is then important that the time for live finger detection is short enough to avoid affecting image quality significantly.

25

30

For a sweep sensor of the type described in EP 0988614 this could be accomplished by skipping e.g one or two lines of image data and perform the live finger detection during this time. As mentioned above this solution comprises a number of sensor elements for measuring the impedance between a stimulation electrode and the sensor elements.

- 5 According to the present invention the role of the sensor elements may be altered for one or a few measuring periods for measuring the condition of the finger. As the solution described in the abovementioned application allows for over sampling and rejection of unnecessary data the live finger detection mode should not be noticeable in the resulting fingerprint image.

10

In this case it is also important that the geometrical area used for live finger detection overlaps the area used for fingerprint imaging, so that one can be certain that the detected live finger and the imaged objects are indeed the same.

- 15 As previously described, the criterion for accepting an object as a live finger may be based on measurements of at least one impedance related parameter from at least one of the electrode configurations.

- 20 This parameter may e.g. be a value or combination of values related to the measured impedance, such as the phase, magnitude, resistance or reactance, or it may be a variation of some value with respect to frequency. The parameter may also be some derived value, e.g. the frequency at which some parameter attains a certain value.

- 25 In a preferred embodiment, at least one of these parameters is related to an observed phase change of the measured 4-point finger impedance taking place in the frequency range between approximately 10 kHz and 1 MHz. In this frequency range, the finger impedance phase has been seen to undergo a shift of 50- 90 degrees as the dominating part of the impedance changes from capacitive to resistive.

- 30 The change from a dominating capacitive to a resistive impedance is also seen as a change in the frequency derivative of the impedance magnitude, which changes from negative to around zero when frequency passes a typical frequency.

Figures 4-7 show the measured magnitude and phase of the impedance for a number of live fingers from different persons, for two different electrode configurations. Figure 4 and 5 refer to one electrode configuration while figures 6 and 7 refer to another.

5

A strong positive shift in phase is observed for both configurations. It is also observed that the impedance curve is essentially flat above the frequency of phase transition.

10 A similar phenomenon is not observed for any other substance we have tested. A so strong phase shift is not observed when the finger is measured using only two-point impedance measurements. Thus this is a possible criteria for determining the validity of a finger.

15 Properties of this frequency shift, such as its magnitude and its transition frequency, can be characterized in a number of different ways. For instance, the measured, complex impedance can be plotted as a function of frequency, i.e by plotting the phase and magnitude against the frequency or by plotting the imaginary part against the real part with frequency as a parameter, see figure 8. In this figure a possible analysis for identifying live finger is illustrated, in showing the imaginary and real parts of the
20 measured impedances Z_I and Z_R . As mentioned above the slope, centre of gravity or lengths of these curves are some possible parameters for identifying a live finger. In a preferred embodiment the slope is used as a basis for live finger confirmation.

25 The advantage of the latter method is that the curve will look similar for different fingers even if the transition point occurs for quite different frequencies.

Certain characteristic of these curves, such as curve derivative, length, "center of mass", specific transition frequencies or the frequency when the curve approaches a certain value, may then be derived by an automatic computing unit and used as live finger
30 identification parameters. The skilled engineer will be familiar with that the same measured properties can be presented in a number of different ways of which many are equivalent mathematically.

It has also been observed that the typical shift frequency changes when the distance between the electrodes increase. This is because a larger distance in general gives a higher measuring depth in the finger, and that the electrical properties of the finger vary with depth. This is visualized by comparing the curves in figure 4 and 5, corresponding to a short electrode distance, with those of figures 6 and 7 (longer electrode distance). In figure 4 and 5 the typical transition frequency is much lower than in figure 6 and 7.

The measured shift in transition frequency with electrode distance, which is very characteristic for live fingers, can be represented parametrically, and this or these parameters can be used to improve the live finger identification model.

It is seen from figure 4-7 that the actual transition frequency varies from person to person. This may be due to variations in humidity level or stratum corneum thickness, and may be corrected for by measuring across a larger interval of frequency, or by measuring at several different electrode distances. As seen by the curves, increasing the frequency has approximately the same effect on the phase as increasing the electrode distance. Around the transition frequency, an increase in frequency or electrode distance will generally increase the phase for live fingers. This very specific relationship between electrode distance and phase can be modeled mathematically and used as yet another criterion for identifying a live finger.

Preferably, the criterion for accepting a live finger is based on the measurement of more than one parameter. A set of relevant parameters or variables can e.g be found by feeding obtained impedance data into a multivariate model as illustrated in figure 3. The set of parameters according to a preferred embodiment be the impedance data illustrated in figure 8.

Through statistical analysis of measured data from live and fake fingers such a model will output a set of weighted, combined variables (typically two or three) that are optimized for distinguishing real from fake fingers. The model thus comprising chosen

deviation limits within the data set, being sufficient to distinguish the real, dead and fake fingers.

Preferably, the variables should be normalized using any available methods, so as to
5 avoid influences from varying sensor characteristics etc, and statistically independent.

The electrode configuration to be used for obtaining the desired variables will preferably be determined by the signal processing system based on measurements on several of the electrode configurations. This may be obtainable using several different
10 electrodes, e.g., as mentioned above in a finger print scanner, but also related so other systems comprising a number of electrodes for performing measurements on skin.

A possible alternatively solution to the variation of sensor combinations discussed above is that one configuration is measured at a time until the measurements match the
15 given criterion, and after this concluding or switching to a second configuration. Measurements obtained from different electrode configurations may also be combined.

Two-point impedance data or other measurements on the finger (e.g temperature) may be used in combination with the four-point data to enhance the selectivity towards fake
20 or dead fingers. Only objects where all the specified variables fall within certain limits will be deemed a live finger. Other objects will be rejected.

This is shown schematically in the figure 3 for a model with two variables, where only objects that fall within the indicated oval area (obtained data shown as triangles) are
25 considered live. The circles outside the oval correspond to data for rejected objects.

In summary, the preferred method, which requires not only one specific value but a set of variables to be within certain limits, will make it extremely difficult to construct a "false finger" material. On its side, dead fingers will be rejected due to biological
30 processes taking place in the finger after death, changing the electrical parameters.

C l a i m s

1. Sensor assembly for determining the condition of a structure, especially for confirming if a measured fingerprint is on a live finger, by measuring characteristics of close to the structure surface, the sensor comprising at least two current supply
5 electrodes coupled to a current source, providing an electrical current to the skin, at least two pickup electrodes at chosen and different positions relative to the current supply electrode(s), at least a first of said pickup electrodes being coupled to an instrument for measuring the voltage between said first pickup electrode and at least one of the pickup or current supply electrodes
10 storage means for storing a predetermined set of values characterizing a certain condition of the surface,
 and calculation means for comparing the characteristics from each pickup electrode with the measurements of the other pickup electrodes and with the predetermined set of characteristics for determining whether surface is in the certain
15 condition.
2. Sensor assembly according to claim 1, wherein the supplied current is oscillating within a chosen frequency range.
- 20 3. Sensor assembly according to claim 2, comprising measuring means for measuring the impedance at each pickup electrode, and wherein said calculation means comprises comparing means for comparing the imaginary and real parts of the impedance signals as functions of the applied frequency, by determining the slope of the resulting curve, and comparing this slope with a predetermined set of slopes indicating a
25 live finger.
4. Sensor assembly according to claim 1, wherein the distance a first of said supply electrodes and sad first pickup electrode is less than 1mm.
- 30 5. Sensor assembly according to claim 1, comprising control means for interchanging the roles of the electrodes such that the roles of the pickup and supply

electrodes may change sequentially for varying the relative positions between the sensors and thus the measured characteristics of the surface.

6. Sensor assembly according to claim 5,, comprising measuring means for measuring the phase of the signal at each pickup electrode, and wherein said calculation means comprises comparing means for comparing the distance between the pick up and supply electrode at chosen frequencies with the corresponding phase of the signal, and comparing these parameters with a predetermined set indicating a live finger.

7. Sensor assembly according to claim 1, wherein the pickup electrodes are constituted by sensor elements in a fingerprint sensor array.

8. Method for characterising the condition of a structure close to its surface, e.g the electrical characteristics of two outer parts of the skin, i.e. the stratum corneum and the viable skin, comprising the steps of:

- applying a current or voltage to the skin between at least two electrodes,
- measuring the impedance between one of said current supply electrodes and at least two pickup electrodes positioned at chosen distances from said current supply electrode,
- comparing the measured impedances with a predetermined set of values characterising at least one condition of the structure,
- determining the condition of the structure based on the comparisons between the measured values and the predetermined set of values.

9. Method according to claim 8, wherein the step of applying a current or voltage between the two electrodes comprises the application of a varying frequency signal and measuring the impedance between one of said current supply electrodes and at least two pickup electrodes positioned at chosen distances from said current supply electrode.

10. Method according to claim 9, wherein the comparison of the measured impedances by determining the slope of the curve describing the relationship between

the imaginary and real parts of the measured impedance signal as a function of applied frequency, and comparing the determined slope with a predetermined set of values characterizing a live finger.

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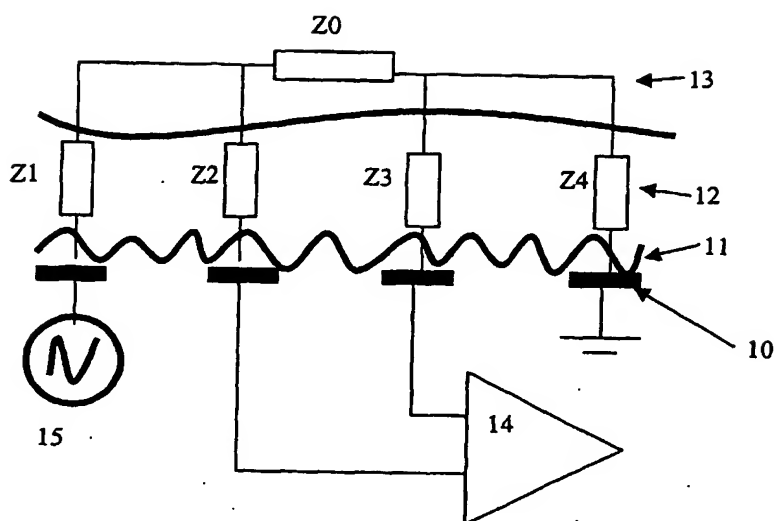


Fig. 1

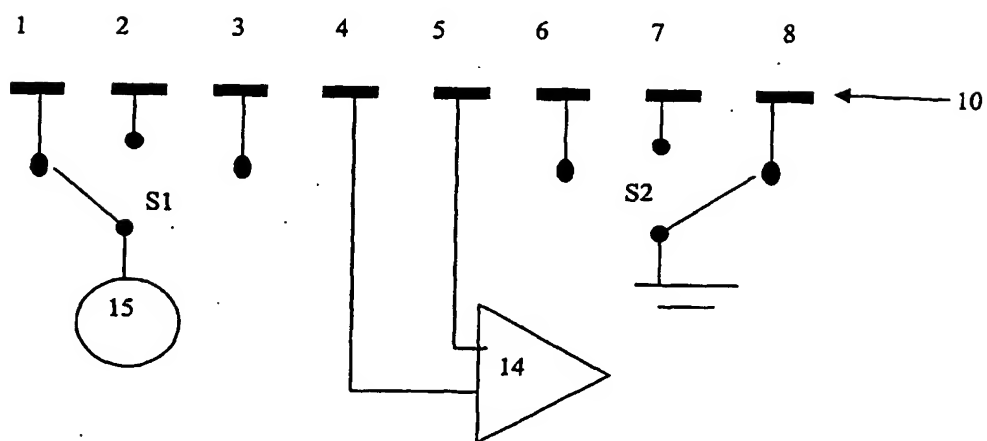


Fig. 2

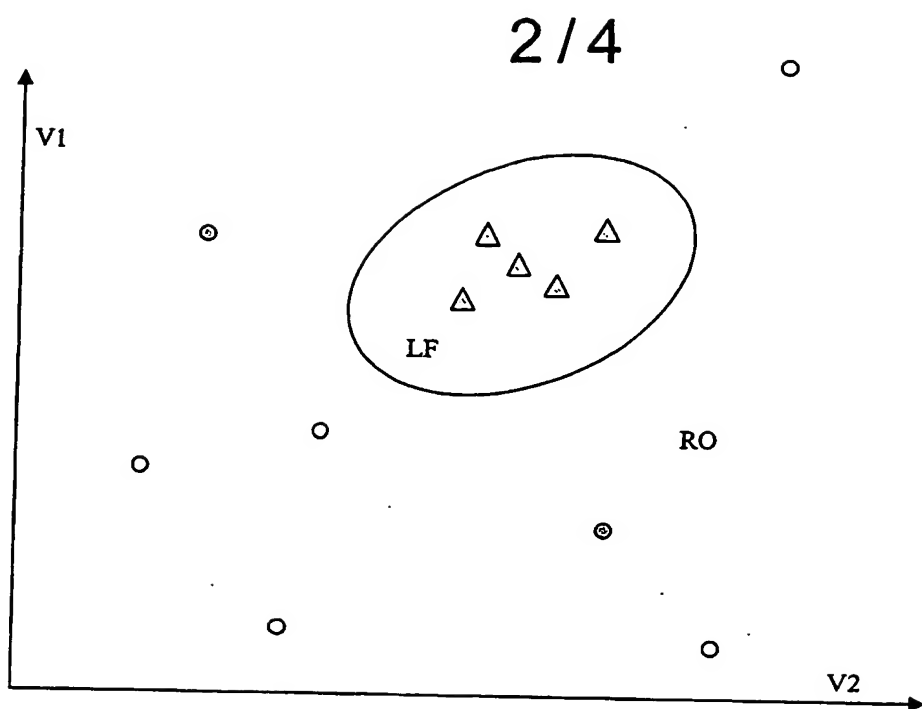


Fig. 3

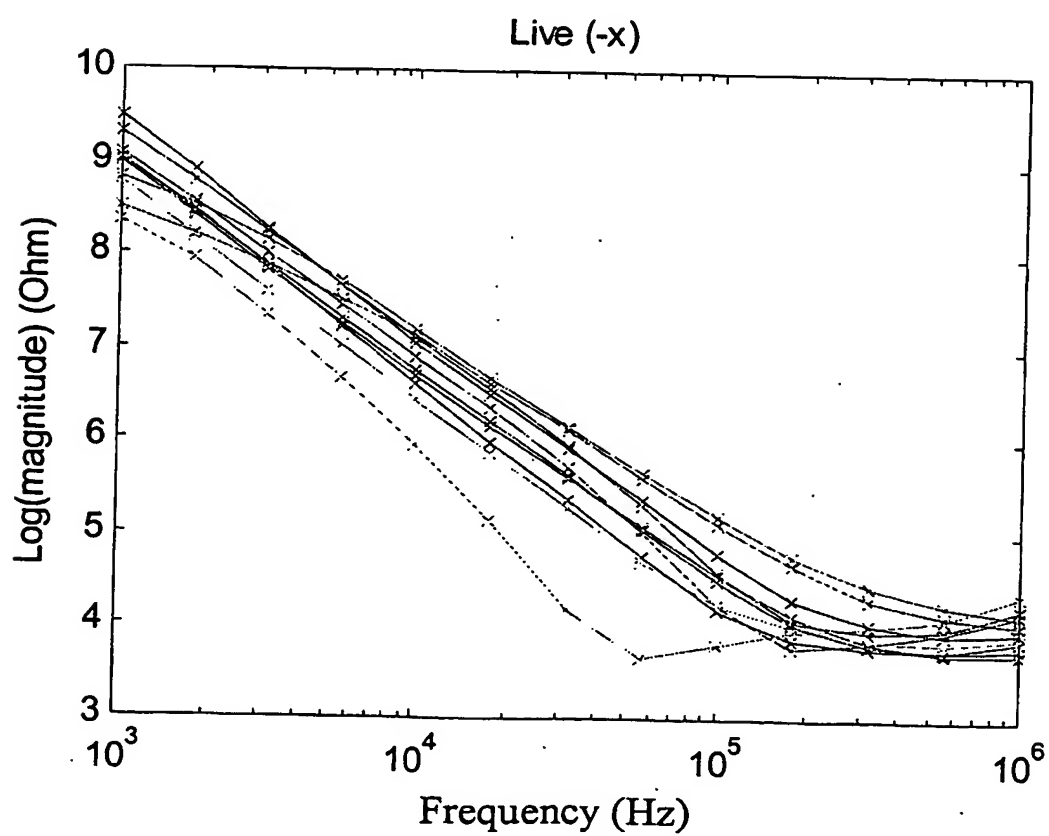


Fig. 4

3 / 4

Live (-x)

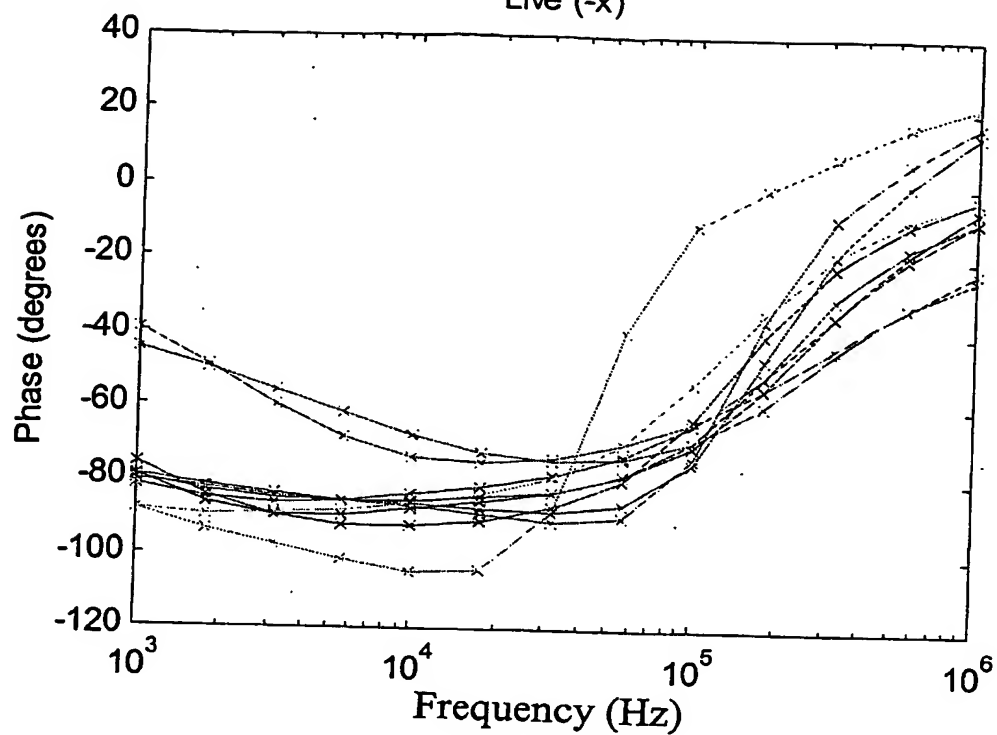


Fig. 5

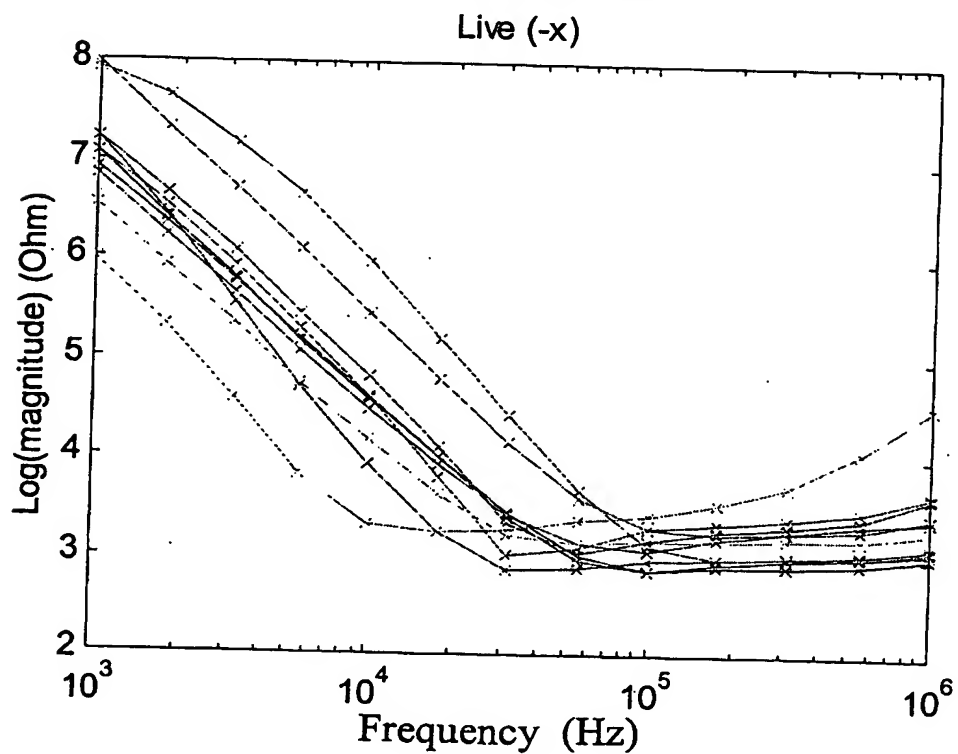


Fig. 6

4 / 4

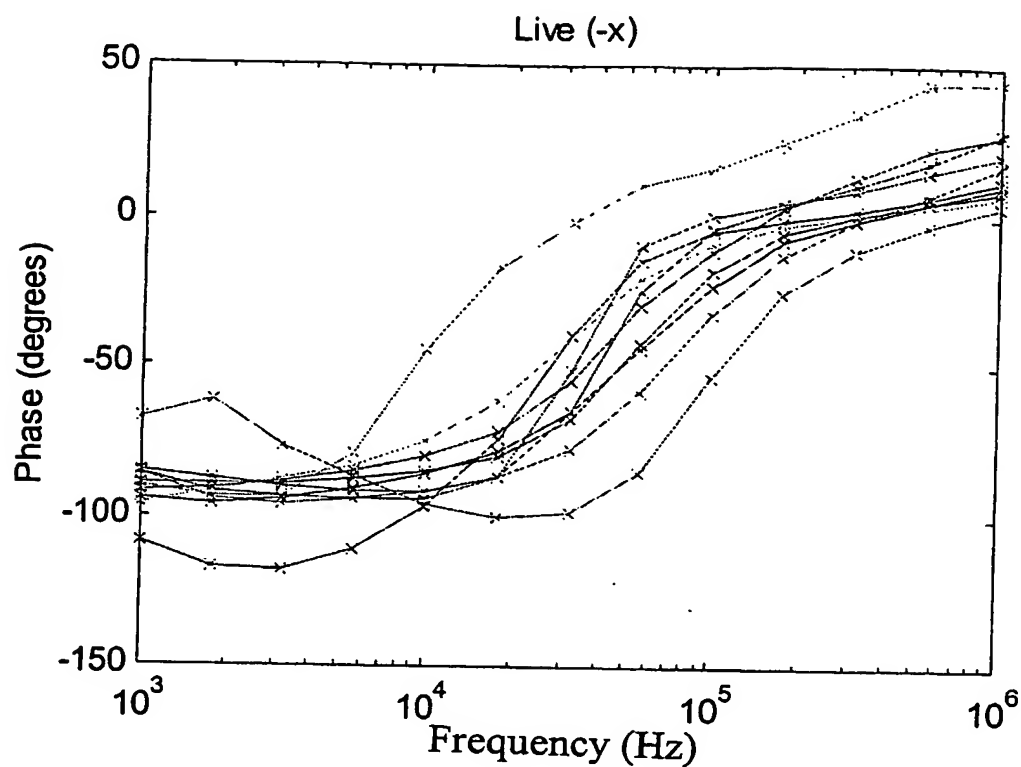


Fig. 7

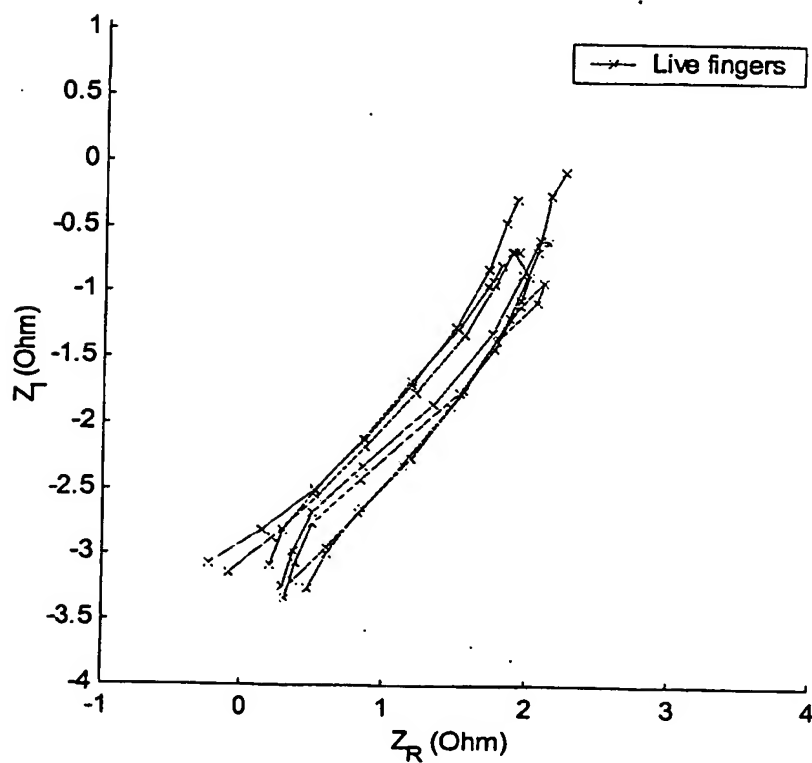


Fig. 8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/NO 2003/000405

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC7: A61B 5/103, A61B 5/05

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC7: A61B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

SE,DK,FI,NO classes as above

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-INTERNAL, WPI DATA

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
P,X	WO 03094724 A1 (IDEX ASA), 20 November 2003 (20.11.2003), see the whole document	1-10
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X	WO 0019894 A1 (POLARTECHNICS LIMITED), 13 April 2000 (13.04.2000), page 5, line 25 - line 35; page 6, line 20 - page 7, line 11; page 8, line 31 - page 10, line 9, figures 1b,4,5, abstract, page 14 - page 15	1-5,8,9
Y	--	6,7,10

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

6 February 2004

Date of mailing of the international search report

18-02-2004

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

Swedish Patent Office

Box 5055, S-102 42 STOCKHOLM

Facsimile No. +46 8 666 02 86

Authorized officer

Pär Moritz/mj

Telephone No. +46 8 782 25 00

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/NO 2003/000405

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 9923945 A1 (FIELDS), 20 May 1999 (20.05.1999), page 2, line 25 - page 6, line 12; page 8, line 25 - page 10, line 10, figure 2	1-5,8,9
Y	--	6,7,10
A	US 2001005424 A (MARKSTEINER), 28 June 2001 (28.06.2001), see summary of the invention	1-5,8,9
Y	--	6,7,10
A	US 5953441 A (SETLAK), 14 Sept 1999 (14.09.1999), column 8, line 5 - line 35; column 9, line 51 - column 10, line 47, figures 1-13	1-5,8,9
Y	--	6,7,10
A	WO 0156468 A2 (MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY), 9 August 2001 (09.08.2001), page 13, line 24 - page 14, line 6; page 15, line 9 - line 14; page 18, line 1 - line 26, figures 2a,2b,3	1-5,8,9
A	EP 0315854 A1 (KAO CORPORATION), 17 May 1989 (17.05.1989), page 4, line 7 - line 29, figures 1, 2, abstract	1-5,8,9
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/NO 2003/000405

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